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**BIRDS DESTROY CERTAIN INSECTS AND WEED SEEDS  
AND ARE USEFUL TO THE FARMER.**

**What a Bird Eats Largely Determines Whether It  
Is Beneficial or Injurious to Humanity.**

Washington, D.C. How birds which destroy harmful insects and weed seeds may be useful to the farmer is described in a new Farmers' Bulletin (No. 630) of the U. S. Department of Agriculture entitled, "Some Common Birds Useful To the Farmer." The new publication has 27 pages and 23 illustrations (not colored) of the birds described. It contains much of the information included in one of the Department's former publications entitled, "Fifty Common Birds Of Farm and Orchard." The Department's supply of this latter pamphlet has been exhausted and it can now only be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C., where it is sold at 15 cents a copy. It contains numerous colored illustrations of the birds mentioned. The new bulletin, "Some Common Birds Useful to the Farmer" will be furnished free to all applicants by the Department.

Whether a bird is beneficial or injurious depends almost entirely on what it eats, says the introduction to the new bulletin. In the case of species which are very abundant, or which feed to some extent on the crops of the farmer, the question of their average diet becomes one of supreme importance, and only by stomach examination can it be satisfactorily solved. Field observations are at best but fragmentary and inconclusive and lead to no final results. Birds are often accused of eating this or that product of cultivation, when an examination of the stomachs shows the accusation to be unfounded. Accordingly, the Biological Survey has conducted for some years past a systematic investigation of the food of those species which are most common about the farm and garden.

Within certain limits birds eat the kind of food that is most accessible, especially when their natural food is scarce or wanting. Thus they sometimes injure the crops of the farmer who has unintentionally destroyed their natural food in his improvement of swamp or pasture. Most of the damage done by birds and complained of by farmers and fruit growers arises from this very cause. The berry-bearing shrubs and seed-bearing weeds have been cleared away, and the birds have no recourse but to attack the cultivated grain or fruit which have replaced their natural food supply. The great majority of land birds subsist upon insects during the period of nesting and moulting, and also feed their young upon them during the first few weeks. Many species live almost entirely upon insects, taking vegetable food only when other subsistence fails. It is thus evident that in the course of a year birds destroy an incalculable number of insects, and it is difficult to overestimate the value of their services in restraining the great tide of insect life.

In winter, in the northern part of the country, insects become scarce or entirely disappear. Many species of birds, however, remain during the cold season and are able to maintain life by eating vegetable food, as the seeds of weeds. Here again is another useful function of birds in destroying these weed seeds and thereby lessening the growth of the next year.

The new publication discusses the food habits of more than 50 birds belonging to 12 families. Many are eastern forms which are represented in the West by slightly different species or subspecies, but unless the food habits differ they are not separately described. Among the popular birds included, are the robin, bluebird, wren, brown thrasher, catbird, bobolink, oriole, crow, cuckoo, and the American sparrow.